

## **Spring Pet Tips**

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As the weather becomes warmer insects start to emerge. Several insects serve as vectors for diseases that affect pet animals.

1. Some flies are able to bite animals and can cause wounds. A common place for this to occur is on the tips of the ears. The flies repeatedly irritate the area for a blood meal and produce chronic sores. Products are available to reduce the occurrence of “fly strike”.

Fly larva or maggots also can infest wounds and reproduce in fecal matter. Good sanitation helps reduce the numbers of flies in your environment. Flytraps are also available.

2. Mosquitoes transmit heartworms to dogs, cats, and ferrets. These pet animals should be maintained on the appropriate heartworm preventative medication to stop development of this disease. Remember that heartworm disease is much easier to prevent than treat. Even mild cases of heartworm disease can produce lasting damage to the cardio-respiratory system. And heartworm treatments are dangerous for cats with this disease. Heartworm preventatives are available for dogs, cats, and ferrets. Heartworm tests are also available to identify infection with this parasite.

Mosquitoes also transmit diseases to horses and humans such as West Nile Virus and Equine Encephalitis's.

3. Fleas transmit several diseases. One example is a parasite species of tapeworms. Tapeworm adults live in the intestinal system and cause discomfort and some gastrointestinal signs. Tapeworms compete with the host animal for nutrition and can cause the animal to be malnourished. Medications are available to remove tapeworms, but flea control is necessary to prevent further infections. The intermediate host the flea must be ingested to transmit this parasite. Animals can also be allergic to the bite of a flea. Severe dermatitis, red, itchy skin and secondary skin infections can result from this allergy. Again flea control is a must with this condition. Fleas can also cause anemia in puppies and kittens due to blood loss to the flea. Several new innovative products are available to control fleas. Flea prevention must address both the adult fleas and their developmental stages. Remember that the flea eggs, larva, and pupae exist in the

environment (yard, house, pet living area). Many of the new products contain insect growth regulators that prevent these stages from developing thus significantly reducing flea populations.

4. Ticks are quite concerning. They are responsible for transmitting several diseases, such as, Lyme disease, Ehrlichiosis, and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. These diseases can cause significant illness. Products are available to control ticks and eliminate them prior to disease transmission. Ticks also transmit disease to humans and are concern for the pet owner as well as the pet. Pet owners should be aware of how to properly remove and dispose of a tick.

Control measures at home can reduce the numbers of these insects. Mosquitoes reproduce in stagnant water. Items that catch and hold water should be removed or turned over. Low areas in yards should be filled to prevent water from standing. Yards should be kept sanitary and pet waste removed daily to reduce fly reproduction. Various insecticides can be used to control fleas and ticks per manufacturer recommendations.

For more information please contact one of our Veterinary Treatment Facilities. We will be happy to answer your questions and provide education about the products available for your pet(s).